
Editorial from the Editor-in-Chief: Maturation of Chiropractic Education

I recently completed a 30-year project of writing the biography of the former president of the chiropractic college I attended. *Joseph Janse: The Apostle of Chiropractic Education* is the life history of a man who served as president of the National College of Chiropractic from 1945 to 1983—38 years of service.

Any aficionado of chiropractic history will recognize the significance of individuals who led the profession in years past. College presidents were often better known than the schools they led. Personalities dominated; often individual faculty members were subservient to their leaders or they would find themselves unemployed.

Names like Palmer, Napolitano, Janse, Wolf, Logan, Haynes, Cleveland, and Budden are powerhouse personalities remembered more for themselves than the colleges each of them led for so many years. By way of contrast, who knows the name of the current president of Yale or Harvard or Stanford or even Whittier College? We recognize the name of the university or college and have a fair glimpse of the type of institution it is and the quality it represents, but are usually clueless as to who presides.

I consider this awareness of an institutional image absent the dependence of an awareness of the institutional leader as a measure of institutional maturity. In other words, the institution stands on its own reputation and not on the reputation of an individual officer within the institution.

One may argue that the reputation of Cal Tech rests on the fact that many faculty members are recipients of the Nobel Prize in one category or another. This is true; but the reputation of the institution rests on the collective reputations of its outstanding faculty members—and most certainly not the reputation of its president.

This I deem a second measure of educational maturity in an academic institution. Although we may not know individual faculty members at Cal Tech or USC, we presume by a variety of inputs that the faculty is exceptional. In other words, their teaching skills, their research, scholarly productivity, student support and interactions, and their love for what they do all contribute to the perceived image of their institution.

What then is the level of educational maturity within chiropractic education? (Although I presume these same measures could be applied to educational institutions within acupuncture and oriental medicine, I am not familiar with their internal workings or the personalities of their leadership to comment.) When I mention the name, “Life University,” does the image of Sid Williams come to mind? Likewise, one cannot help but think of the four generations of Cleveland chiropractors when one mentions “Cleveland College” simply by name association. Other schools may not have such a close association between the personality of the president and the image of the institution.

Chiropractic education is maturing. As a profession, our educational institutions are becoming less personality dependent. Presidents have an important role to play in an academic institution. Institutions cannot function adequately without a president, but as an institution matures, its dependence upon a personality in the chief executive role for success is less critical. Rather, institutional image and institutional personality and institutional success are more the product of the faculty and the work they produce.

As the chiropractic profession continues to mature and as individual institutions within the profession continue to mature, the comings and goings of presidents and other senior leadership, although important in the context of local circumstance, will have little consequence on institutional success. Hopefully, chiropractic educational institutions are approaching a level of academic maturity that allows them to be more reliant on faculty productivity than they are on presidential personalities.

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